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SUBJECT: Germany Elections: National Winners Not Celebrating in
Northern Germany

REF: A) Hamburg 23, B) 09 Hamburg 00000

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11. (SBU) Reflecting the national trend, the primary election result in northern Germany was an overall loss in votes and influence for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) rather than strong increases for the other parties. As reported (ref B), senior SPD leaders remain concerned about the move of many party members to The Left Party. All national parties except the SPD gained incremental ground in northern Germany, but no single party can claim victory in this election.

12. (SBU) Although the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) lost votes in most of northern Germany (down 0.4 percent - 4.2 percent) except for a slight gain in Bremen, they actually "won" four of the five northern Germany states. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (M-V), Chancellor Angela Merkel's home state, the CDU became the strongest party for the first time in eleven years. Mirroring the national trend, the SPD reported double-digit losses (from 11.3 percent - 15.2 percent) throughout the entire district. The Free Democratic Party (FDP), although scoring well enough in Schleswig-Holstein's state elections to form part of the "black/yellow" state coalition, fared worse in all five northern German states than the national average. Support for The Left Party increased in northern Germany; it more than doubled in Bremen. Nevertheless, the only state where The Left Party has any significant strength is, unsurprisingly, M-V. Support for the right-wing extremist National Democratic Party (NPD) in M-V dropped by more than fifty percent in comparison to the 2006 state election, and remains insignificant, despite its fringe appeal.

13. (SBU) Comment: Northern Germany's final election figures showed no real surprises, with most parties benefitting more from the SPD's significant losses than from their own campaign and policy strengths. If the SPD is to remain relevant in north Germany, it must regroup and craft a message that appeals to its core center-left constituency, after losing large numbers of its far left-leaning members to The Left Party. The Left Party gained strength in all northern German states, but it remains to be seen whether -- other than in M-V -- there is any broad-based support for its issues or positions. The CDU "won" some token new ground in M-V and Bremen, but blazed no spectacular new trails. The Greens performed best in their bastion of Hamburg, and only gained slightly in most states (0.7 percent to 4.2 percent). In none of the five northern states did the FDP perform as well as it did nationally (best regional result was 10 percent in S-H, as opposed to 14.6 percent nationally). While the "black/yellow" coalition seems solid enough on a national level, here in northern Germany it has not gained momentum. END COMMENT.

14. (SBU) This cable has been coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

JOHNSON